What Happened In 70 A.D.?

A Study in Bible Prophecy

by Edward E. Stevens

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Bradford, Pennsylvania

Bible quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Version* unless otherwise indicated.

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Preface

This booklet introduces a view of Bible prophecy which many have found helpful in their Bible study. It answers some tough questions which have always bothered students of the Bible. It provides a CONSISTENT position which easily refutes false doctrines; makes the book of Revelation easier to understand; identifies when miraculous gifts ceased; and refutes the liberal attack on the inspiration of the New Testament. It establishes when the N. T. canon was complete. It is more CONSERVATIVE on most issues than traditional views are. There is NO COMPROMISE of essential truths of the Christian faith.

The key to understanding any passage of Scripture has always been a good grasp of the historical setting in which it was originally written. Too few are willing to look at what history has unveiled. Two thousand years from now our history, culture, politics and language will have changed dramatically. Imagine someone then having to learn the ancient language of "modern English" to read one of our daily newspapers! If they saw one of our political cartoons with a donkey and an elephant dressed in weird uniforms and acting strange, what would they think? How would they go about understanding the cartoon? Not only would they have to study the language, but also our culture, history, politics and economic situation as well. The same principle applies to Bible study. If we are REALLY going to understand the book of Revelation, we will have to seriously and carefully study the language, history, culture and politics of the First Century. Of course, this does not mean that the truths essential for salvation are that difficult to understand. Those essentials are couched in simple language that everyone can grasp. But there are numerous scriptures in the Bible which are "hard to understand" (cf. 2 Pet. 3:16), and Bible prophecy is one of

those things which must be approached with much more attention given to the original historical context.

One of the main purposes for this booklet is to provide a closer look at the historical framework of the New Testament. Why not (at least temporarily) lay aside our traditional interpretations of the book of Revelation (since they have taken us no where), and objectively look at another alternative.

Please note also that this booklet was NOT written to cast guilt upon modern Jews for what some of their first-century ancestors might have done. The author holds NO anti-semitic malice toward the Jewish people at all, but rather a fond appreciation for the rich heritage they have given us and a sympathetic understanding of the unspeakable anguish they have suffered throughout history. The world has much to learn from them, and much to thank them for. At the same time, it needs to be said that misunderstanding of Bible prophecy has caused many Christians to naively support the expansionist policies of the Zionist state of Israel. The view which this book presents should bring a little more fairness to this issue.

Modern-day Israel is not "the promised land" nor "God's Chosen People" any longer. Those promises were fulfilled in Christ and His spiritual kingdom which we are now a part of. There is absolutely no Biblical or rational basis for Christian support of the Zionist cause today, especially when they are the ones committing the atrocities. And, Biblically speaking, why would Christ want to reject His spiritual kingdom and go back to another physical-nationalistic system? That would seem to nullify His "once-for-all" sacrifice by going back to animal sacrifices. The Bible does not authorize a rebuilding of the temple, nor a restoration of the priesthood. Those things were completely fulfilled and replaced by "the better things" in Christ and His spiritual kingdom.

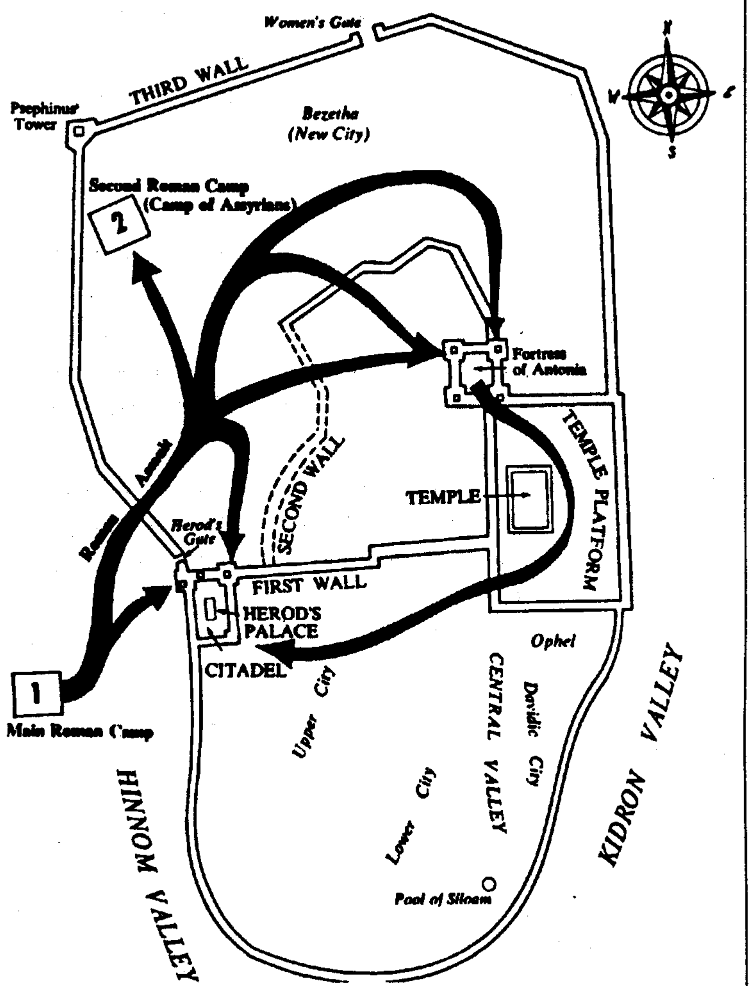
I'm sure someone will accuse me of anti-semitism (racism). But since when did criticism of religious and political issues make one guilty of racism? Is it legitimate to accuse someone of "anti-Irish-ism" if he criticizes President Reagan's political and religious beliefs? Criticism is not the same as racism.

We are certainly not advocating that Jewish people give up the land that was given to them after World War II. But neither are we in favor of them keeping lands which were not given to them, but which were seized by brutal, in-humane, racist and terrorist actions.

The Palestinian people (whom the Israelis are mistreating) deserve our sympathy and support also. The Israelis are the ones guilty of racism! They are the true "anti-semites". Many of the modern Israelis (especially the Ashkenazic Jews) are not even descendants of semitic races at all. But the Palestinians are direct descendants of semitic tribes. By trying to obliterate the Palestinian people, the Israelis are guilty of the very "anti-semitism" (racism) they accuse others of. It was not right for Hitler to try to obliterate races he considered "inferior" to his own. But, did you know that the Jewish religion (based on the Talmud) believes that non-Jews are sub-human, soul-less and unclean. They believe we are nothing more than lowly slaves without rights for them to do with as they please. You tell me who is the ***real*** racist?

In the interest of brevity, many verses will be referred to which will not be written out. PLEASE take time to look up each of these and study them in their contexts. Misunderstanding might result otherwise.

The Siege of Jerusalem – A.D. 70



What Really Happened In 70 AD?

Most of us need to refresh our memory concerning First Century history. Some very important events happened then which we have seldom (if ever) heard of, much less grasped the significance of. In the year 66 AD, the Jews revolted against Rome. Many things provoked this revolt, some to the blame of the Romans, and some to the blame of the Jews. The Romans came to put down the revolt, and by the summer of 70 AD they had captured the city of Jerusalem and put a stop to the revolt. The city was burned and the temple was completely desecrated and spoiled.

Jesus had predicted all these things about 40 years before. All His predictions came true. The Jewish nation and sacrificial system was so completely dismantled that the Jewish people have never been able to re-establish the temple and sacrifices in any permanent way since. Many rabbis refer to 70 AD as "The End of Biblical Judaism." This date was important for Christians as well.

Christians had been looked upon as being just another sect of Judaism. Jews of other sects (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc.) had severely persecuted Christians in the attempt to stop them before they were firmly established. But 70 AD changed all that. After 70 AD, Christians were no longer considered just another sect of the Jews. Jews of all the other sects had taken part in the revolt against Rome, but not the Christian Jews. Remembering Jesus' prediction of these things and His warning not to get caught-up in them, the Jewish Christians fled across the Jordan river to Pella. By not participating in the revolt they immediately distinguished themselves from the Jews. Christians were building a spiritual empire, not a physical one, a point we would do well to remember today in view of the Zionist appeals for our support.

Since the Law could not be kept after the destruction, the controversy over circumcision and Law-Keeping immediately subsided. The Jewish nation was so completely destroyed that it would never again be strong enough to seriously threaten the existence of Christ's followers.

The destruction of Jerusalem indeed showed that the Kingdom had been taken away from the Jewish nation and given to Christ's followers (see Matt. 21:33-43). It provided final testimony to that generation as to who Jesus was. It showed clearly that God was not interested in a physical empire for the Jews, but the spiritual reign of Jesus. Jesus had told his crucifiers that they would see with their own eyes something which would vindicate His claims to be the Messiah (see Matt. 26:63,64). That vindication came in 70 AD when the Jewish nation was destroyed. The Jews of that generation must have been extremely wicked for God to destroy them in this way. That destruction was an eye-opener for the rest of the Roman world also. It established Christ's followers as the TRUE ISRAEL of God.

The destruction was far more significant than most of us have ever realized. Not only did Jesus predict the destruction would come in His generation, but also His COMING and the END OF THE AGE (Matt. 24:3). All these things were to happen in that First-Century generation (Matt. 24:34). There are numerous passages which teach that Jesus was to come again in the First Century. Study the following very carefully and notice their reference to the TIME of Jesus' return: **James 5:8f; 1 Pet. 4:7; Matt. 10:23; 16:27f; Rom. 13:11f; Heb. 10:37; 1 Jn. 2:18; Rev. 1:1,3; 22:6,7,10,12,20.** These verses as well as others make it clear that Jesus would return in that generation. What we traditionally call "The Second Coming" of Christ happened then IN THAT GENERATION when Jerusalem was destroyed! These time statements cannot be

taken another way without casting doubt upon the integrity of the NT. For more Scriptures which teach that the return would happen in the First Century, see Appendix I (p.25).

The book of Revelation describes the horrors that came upon the Jews during their war with Rome (66-70 AD). The battle of Armageddon was fought at 70 AD when God used the Roman armies to stop the Jewish persecution of Christians. The book of Revelation, as well as all the other books of the New Testament, were written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the miraculous gifts (speaking in tongues, writing by inspiration, etc.) seem to have ceased at 70 AD. Everything that was essential for us to know about the Kingdom had been fully revealed by that time. The immature state of the church had given way to the complete state (1 Cor. 13:8ff). The Kingdom had been fully established under Christ's control, and Christ's enemies (who had rejected Him and persecuted His followers) had been destroyed. All the Old Testament prophecies about the Kingdom and Jesus' return had been fulfilled (Luke 21:22,31).

Inspiration of New Testament Under Attack!

This view of prophecy totally disarms the liberal attack on the inspiration of the New Testament. The liberals use the numerous N.T. statements about the IMMINENT return of Christ to prove that the N.T. writers were mistaken and therefore uninspired. They use passages like these: Matt. 16:27,28; Rom. 13:11,12; Jas. 5:8,9; 1 Pet. 4:7,17; 1 Jno. 2:17,18; Rev. 1:1,3; Rev. 22:6,7,10,12,20. Jesus told His disciples, *"Some of those who are standing here shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom"* (Matt. 16:27,28). Paul told the Romans that it was *"Already THE HOUR for them to awaken"*, because *"The Night is*

almost gone and THE DAY is AT HAND" (Rom. 13:11,12). Paul also reminded the Corinthians that they were living at a time when *"The Ends of the Ages had come"* (1 Cor. 10:11). Paul stated that Christ's ministry on Earth was during the time when the ages were being consummated (Heb. 9:26). James wrote (in 63 AD just before he was martyred), *"The coming of the Lord is AT HAND"* and *"The Judge is standing RIGHT AT THE DOOR"* (Jas. 5:8,9). Peter said, *"THE END of all things is AT HAND"* and *"IT IS TIME for judgment to begin"* (1 Pet. 4:7,17). John (who also wrote the book of Revelation) says in his first epistle, *"The world is passing away"* and *"It is THE LAST HOUR"* (1 Jn. 2:17,18). In the book of Revelation he says in two different places that all the things revealed in this book were to *"SHORTLY take place"* and that the time of its fulfillment was *"AT HAND"* (Rev. 1:1,3; 22:6,10). Jesus affirmed repeatedly in the book of Revelation that His return was to be very *"SOON"* (Rev. 22:7,12,20).

From the above it is easy to see that the New Testament writers DID TEACH that the return of Christ and the End of the Age were NEAR in their lifetime! There was NOT a shadow of doubt in their minds. They do NOT say "maybe" or "possibly" that He would return soon. They affirm definitely that the coming and end were near in their generation. The liberal responds to this in the following way:

> *"We know Jesus didn't return in the First Century, therefore the N.T. writers were mistaken in their predictions of an imminent return; and since inspired men cannot write mistaken things, they must not have been inspired!"*

The only way to deflate these arguments without engaging in incredible amounts of theological gymnastics is to take the N.T. statements at face value! They said Christ would return

in their generation. They didn't say "maybe" or "possibly", they affirmed it definitely. Since they were inspired (and therefore accurate), Christ MUST HAVE returned then when they said He would!

Josephus and First Century History

There is some fascinating background information regarding the New Testament and the destruction of Jerusalem in the historical records of JOSEPHUS. Although he is not an inspired writer, his history can be trusted as being fairly accurate. He was one of the top ten Jewish generals in the war with Rome. He was captured early in the war and allowed to travel with the Romans and record the history of the war. The reason his information is so valuable is because he was an eyewitness.

Josephus says that just before the war ANGELIC ARMIES *("chariots and troops of soldiers...running about among the clouds")* were seen surrounding Jewish cities. He records the fact that people in the first century called Jerusalem *"THE GREAT CITY"*, just like the book of Revelation does (Rev. 11:8). He says that the 70 AD conflict with Rome was the *"Revolution of the Ages"* (that is to say, the changing from one age to another). He talks about pools of blood and intense fires similar to the descriptions in Revelation 14:20 and other passages. Didn't Jesus predict that these kinds of things would happen (Luke 21:11,25-27)? Josephus' history furnishes numerous other insights into the nature of the war and its significance for both Jews and Christians. But, not only JOSEPHUS records these things! The Roman historian, TACITUS, and the Christian historian, EUSEBIUS, both say that these things happened! And the TALMUD records these things as well (*YOMA*, folio 39b). Eusebius highly recom-

mends Josephus as an accurate source for information about the destruction of Jerusalem and (in reference to Josephus' treatment of the destruction) he goes so far as to declare, *"...all this, I say, any one that wishes may see accurately stated in the history written by Josephus"* (Book III, chapter 5, *Ecclesiastical History*). See Appendix II (p. 27) for other references about these things in Josephus.

Just A "Minor" Coming At 70 AD?

There are many who believe there was "some kind of coming" associated with the destruction of Jerusalem, but they are very careful to say it was just a "minor" coming of Jesus and that the "major" return of Christ is still future! They call it, "a coming in judgment upon the Jewish nation." However, the question is, "Where does the New Testament distinguish between a minor coming in judgment and the major return of Christ?" Jesus nor any of the N.T. writers ever stop to explain which "coming" they are talking about. None of them ever say, "Here I'm talking about a minor coming to end the Jewish world, but over there I'm dealing with THE major coming to end the universe." Think of the first-century Christian living before the destruction who had access to only a few of the N.T. books. Would he have known that Jesus was speaking of TWO DIFFERENT "comings of the Son of Man" separated by thousands of years? We have a hard enough time distinguishing between them and we live AFTER 70 AD! The N.T. does not teach two different returns of Christ. He was to return only once, and that happened in the first century when Jerusalem was destroyed! How can He come back again if He hasn't left again? He came in the first century (at 70 A.D.). He hasn't left. He is still present with us. He will always be with us. That is what the word παρουσια (*parousia*) means. His presence will always be with us.

The Date of Revelation

Many today date the book of Revelation in the year 96 AD, but there are some difficult problems created by dating it then. Revelation affirms THE NEARNESS of Christ's return and other end-time events. Notice Rev. 1:1,3 and 22:6,10 in particular. These passages say that the contents of the book were about to be fulfilled VERY SOON. They say that "these things MUST take place SOON" because "the time" for their fulfillment was "AT HAND". One of the things which was to happen "soon" was Jesus' return ("SURELY, I am coming SOON", Rev. 22:7,12,20). If the book was written in 96 AD (like many think) then we will have to find some MAJOR EVENT which happened SHORTLY AFTER 96 AD which was significant enough to call it "the Second Coming" and the fulfillment of Revelation! The problem is, nothing "major" happened shortly after 96 AD! Could 96 AD be the wrong date? Could 70 AD be the right one?

If Revelation was written in 96 AD, what major event in history happened shortly afterwards which was so important for Christians that it needed a book of prophecy written about it? There is no such major event shortly after 96 AD! Rome didn't fall for another 400 years! The Roman persecution didn't end in 96 AD, and didn't end until two and a half centuries later! Revelation must be discussing 70 AD, an event so important that the Bible couldn't ignore it and then deal with lesser-important events (like the death of Domitian) in more detailed fashion.

And from the Jewish viewpoint, it would be unthinkable that God would have wiped out His chosen people without AT LEAST one book of prophecy dealing with it! Even the lesser-important Babylonian destruction of 586 BC had NUMEROUS prophetic books written about it, and the language

describing that destruction is extremely similar to the language in Revelation. Before God disciplined His people He ALWAYS raised up prophets to warn the people to repent, especially if there was going to be a massive destruction (like 70 AD)! And He ALWAYS gave them written books of prophecy in connection with those destructions. If the book of Revelation is not that written warning for 70 AD, then God destroyed His Jewish people without giving a full explanation! It just doesn't seem likely that God would devote a whole book of prophecy to some PAGAN emperor's death and then NOT give a detailed account of His CHOSEN people's massive destruction! Revelation must be dealing with 70 AD!

Those who interpret the book of Revelation in connection with Domitian and Rome are forgetting what the book is presenting. Revelation is NOT just discussing the death of a "beast," but also the downfall and destruction of some "Great City Babylon" and the end to some very threatening persecution. Those who apply the book to Domitian and Rome forget about these last two events. They cannot explain how the city of Rome and the Roman persecution ended shortly after 96 AD! Rome didn't fall for almost 400 years, and the Roman persecution continued until Constantine's day (313 AD)! These events are not very "shortly" after 96 AD! It must be dealing with the Zealots and the Jewish persecution against the church, which did end very soon at 70 AD!

What "Great City" which was important to the Christians and Jews fell "shortly" after 96 AD? What great persecution which was a grave threat to Christ's followers ended "shortly" after 96 AD? NONE DID!!! Revelation (11:8) identifies who the "Great City" was ("the city where their Lord was crucified"): JERUSALEM!!! Revelation (18:24) also identifies who the "Great City" was:

And in her was found the BLOOD OF PROPHETS
and of saints and of ALL who have been slain
ON THE EARTH.

When this verse is compared with Jesus' statements in Luke 13:33-35 and Matthew 23:29-39, one can readily see that the "Great City" under consideration in the book of Revelation is JERUSALEM, not Rome! Jesus says that **Jerusalem** is the city that "kills the prophets," and that the "guilt for ALL the righteous BLOOD shed ON EARTH" would fall upon Jerusalem in that generation (Matt. 23:34-37)! Upon comparing these statements of Jesus with Revelation 18:24, the conclusion is inescapable: JERUSALEM IS THE "GREAT CITY"!!! And, if the book of Revelation is dealing with the downfall of Jerusalem, it must have been written before 70 AD in order to predict it!!!

What great persecution is under consideration in the book of Revelation? The other books of the New Testament speak of a serious persecution which the JEWS inflicted upon the Christians (see Matt. 10:16-23; Matt. 24: 9,10,21; Acts 8:1; Gal. 1:13; etc.). This JEWISH persecution came to a standstill in 70 AD! The death of Domitian in 96 AD did NOT stop the ROMAN persecution. Eusebius makes it clear that Romans persecuted Christians for more than two centuries later. The Roman persecution did not end "shortly" after 96 AD! But if the book was written shortly before 70 AD, there would be an end of some persecution "shortly" afterwards to fulfill it.

In Matthew 23:32-37, Jesus makes it clear that it was the Jews of that generation who were THE REAL THREAT to the Christians. It was they (not the Romans) who had all the blood of the righteous imputed against them! It was the corrupt Jewish leadership who persecuted them "from city to city." It was the city of Jerusalem which contained the blood-stains of

the prophets and saints. The book of Acts shows that the only reason the Romans were even involved in the persecution at all was because the Jewish leadership had to go through the Romans to carry out their threats.

It was the unfaithful among the Jews who were THE REAL THREAT to Christ's followers. Even Paul states (Gal. 1:13,23; 1 Tim. 1:13; Acts 8:3; 9:21) that his intention as a persecutor before he became a Christian was NOT JUST TO DEBATE the Christians and prove they were wrong. He was trying to "DESTROY" them out of existence! As long as the Jewish leadership of that generation had any power behind them they would be a threat to the Christians. No one knew better how to "destroy" the Christians than the Jews. The Jewish temple-system (a physical, sacrificial system) was being challenged by a new spiritual system, and the Jewish religious leaders were OUTRAGED! As long as they were able (until 70 AD), they did everything in their power to blot-out Christianity before it became strongly established.

No other persecution (including all the Roman ones) ever threatened the existence of Christ's followers like this Jewish one did. Tertullian even said that the Roman persecutions helped the church grow ("seed of the Kingdom", *Apologies*). Eusebius also makes it clear that the Jewish persecution was the real threat. And the Jewish persecution was well-nigh universal. There were Jewish communities scattered all over the Roman empire, and Jews who had become Christians on that first Pentecost went back to their communities with the gospel. It didn't take long for the Christians to make their presence and their difference known. A strong persecution immediately ensued. Paul's letters and the book of Acts show this constant struggle going on. It got worse as time progressed. When it became known that Gentiles could be saved without circumcision and Law-keeping, and that the temple-

sacrifices were no longer binding, the Jewish leaders were incensed. They would stop at nothing to put down this new "blasphemy". All that they stood for was being trampled under foot by the Christians.

In Matthew 24:22, Jesus says that unless that "tribulation" was stopped, none of the "elect" would have been left to tell the story! The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD put a stop to this threat. It weakened the Jewish people so much that they couldn't be a threat to the church any longer. They had to concern themselves with their own survival. And, it completely stopped the sacrifices. This was a tremendous help to the Christians. Revelation promised a speedy relief to all this. It has to be dealing with the Jewish persecution and 70 AD! The facts of history favor a pre-70 date for Revelation. Dating it in 96 AD has been the major reason why understanding it has been so difficult. It becomes an easy book to interpret when dated before 70 AD!

Daniel and Revelation

Daniel was promised that there would be further revelation about "these things" given "IN THE END-TIME" when his people would be 'COMPLETELY SHATTERED" (Dan. 12:4-9). The only complete shattering of the Jewish people since Daniel's day to ours was the 70 AD destruction! Therefore, the "end-time" spoken of in Daniel 12 must have been the 70 AD generation. Daniel was told to "seal up" his book because the end-time was still a long way off (Dan. 12:4,9). John, however, was told NOT to seal up his book (Revelation) because the time of its fulfillment was "at hand" (Rev. 22:10). Most people agree that Revelation is dealing with the same things as Daniel, so Revelation must be the further revelation about the "complete shattering" of the Jews which was prom-

ised to Daniel. And, that means that the generation when Revelation was written was the 'END-TIME." If we compare the descriptions (Dan. 10:5,6; Rev. 1:13-15) of the angel who gave Daniel and John these revelations, we'll see incredible similarity, suggesting that the book of Revelation is indeed the continuation of the revelation which Daniel was promised.

Daniel was dealing with the "end-time" of the Jews when they would be "completely shattered" (Dan. 12). If Revelation is dealing with the same things as Daniel, then Revelation must be dealing with 70 AD (since that is what Daniel was dealing with)! And, if Revelation is dealing with 70 AD, it had to be written before 70 in order to predict it.

In Luke 21:22, Jesus said that ALL Old Testament Scripture would be fulfilled by the time Jerusalem was destroyed. That means that Daniel (O.T. Scripture) had to have been fulfilled by 70 AD. And if Revelation is speaking of the same things as Daniel, then Revelation must have predicted some 70 AD events. And in order to predict 70 AD events, it would have to have been written before 70 AD!

Dating the book of Revelation at 96 AD may be popular today, but that doesn't make it right; and dating it before 70 hasn't always been unpopular. There were many during the past four centuries who taught a pre-70 date for Revelation. Philip Schaff, F. W. Farrar, John A. T. Robinson, E. P. Gould, Milton S. Terry and others (in their books listed in the Bibliography) mention more than a hundred different theologians during the past four centuries who took a pre-70 date for Revelation.

Several of these theologians also believed in a pre-70 fulfillment of most or all of Revelation. And these are not just obscure and unknown nobodies! Most of these are in the 'WHO'S WHO" of Biblical scholarship. The ones underlined

below are especially recommended for further study. Many of their books are listed in the Bibliography.

Andreas (fifth century), Arethas (tenth century), Theophylact (1071), Luis De Alcasar (1554-1613), Henry Hammond (1653), John Lightfoot (1658), Hugo Grotius (1664), Sir Isaac Newton (1727), Frank Abauzit (1733), Hardouin (1741), J. J. Wettstein (1751), Bishop Thomas Newton (1754), Harenburg (1759), Johann Gottfried Von Herder (1779), E. G. Hartwig (1780), Eichorn (1791), N. Nisbett (1802), J. C. L. Gieseler (c. 1820), Frederick Bleek (1820), F. H. A. Ewald (1828), F. J. Züllig (1834), J. A. Stephenson (1838), Moses Stuart (1845), Albert Schwegler (1846), Wm. M. L. Dewette (1848), Gottfried Friedrich Lücke (1852), Karl A. Auberlen (1857), Düsterdieck (1859), F. D. Maurice (1861), Philip S. Desprez (1861), Charles Pettit M'llvaine (1961), Charles Wordsworth (1866), J. B. Lightfoot (1867), B. Weiss (1869), Henry Cowles (1871), James Glasgow (1872), H. Gebhardt (1873), J. E. Renan (1873), A. Hilgenfeld (1875), A. Immer (1877), Dean Plumptre (1877), James M. McDonald (1877), James Stuart Russell (1878), Robert Young (1822-1888), Israel P. Warren (1878), Alexander Brown, R. W. Dale (1878), J. T. Harris, J. H. Noyes, Thomas Rattray (1878), Edward Reuss (1880), Samuel Davidson (1882), B. F. Westcott (1882), Milton S. Terry (1883), William Hurte (1884), August Neander (1889), F. W. Farrar, C. A. Goodhart (1891), A. Plummer (1891), T. Randell (1891), W. H. Simcox (1893), W. Sanday (1893), F. J. A. Hort (1894), William Newton Clarke (1894), E. Hampden Cook (1894), G. O. Field (1895), John David Michaelis, Philip Schaff, E. P. Gould (1896), G. Salmon Dean Stanley Tilloch, F. C. Baur, Aube,

Krenkel, Reville, Volkmar, Bunsen, Rudolf Stier, Guericke, Niermeyer, Hentenius, Edward Robinson, Dr. Dollinger, E. C. Selwyn (1900), William S. Urmy (1900), B. W. Henderson (1903), H. J. Holtzman (1912), G. Edmundson (1913), A. S. Peake (1919), A. Weigall (1930), A. D. Momigliano (1934), Ulrich Beeson (1956), C. C. Torrey (1958), K. A. Echkardt (1961), Jay Adams (1966), Foy Wallace (1966), Max R. King (1971), Franklin Camp (1974), J. M. Ford (1975), Ray Hawk, Jessie Mills, John A. T. Robinson (1976), Cornelius Vanderwaal (1979), Burton Coffman (1979), Edward E. Stevens (1982), Timothy A. James (1982), and David Chilton (1985).

MATTHEW 24 AND THE SECOND COMING

Matthew 24 and its parallels (Mark 13; Luke 17; and Luke 21) supply powerful evidence for the idea that Jesus returned in 70 AD. Beginning with Matt. 23:29 and reading straight through to the end of chapter 24, one cannot help but notice the IMMINENCY of the events described there. In Matt. 23:36, Jesus says, "ALL these things shall come upon THIS GENERATION." He further states, in Matt. 24:34, "THIS GENERATION will not pass away until ALL these things take place." Notice that He says "all these things", not just some of them! And one of the "things" mentioned in the context is the "coming of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 42, 44, 46)! Either Jesus returned within a generation (within about 40 years, see Heb. 3:10-17) or He and the N.T. writers were grossly mistaken (and uninspired). Some try to evade this dilemma by dividing Matthew 24 into two sections, the first dealing with 70 AD (verses 1-34), and the second dealing with a future end of the world (verses 35 and following). But this won't work because THE SAME "coming of the Son of

Man" is under consideration in both sections (Matt. 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 42, 44, 46). The chapter cannot be divided. All the events in the "second section" are connected with this "coming of the Son of Man". The events mentioned in the "first section" are also connected with THIS SAME "coming of the Son of Man". The chart on the next two pages (pp. 16, 17) deals with this mistaken idea of dividing Matthew 24 into two sections. Please study it before reading on.

N. T. Written Before 70 AD?

We have discussed the idea that Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem. And, tradition dates most of the New Testament books before 70 AD. There are a few books which everyone likes to place after 70 AD, but nothing more than uncertain tradition or personal preference influences this placement. None can produce reliable evidence to absolutely establish a post-70 date for any N.T. book. It is mainly guesswork and subjective reasoning which determines the date (along with some study of the historical fabric of the New Testament).

Dr. John A. T. Robinson, a noted "liberal" theologian, recently shocked the theological world be writing a book devoted to supporting the idea that ALL the New Testament books were written before 70 AD. This is a strikingly conservative position, since most liberals date much of the New Testament after 70 AD! He says he began the research for his book because he noticed that NONE of the N.T. books mentioned the destruction of Jerusalem as a past event. He calls the destruction of Jerusalem, "the single most datable and climactic event of the period," and he constantly stresses the fact that such an important event COULD NOT have been ignored by the writers of the N.T. if it was past when they

Matthew 24

Section A (Events leading up to 70 A.D.?)

Matthew 24:1-34:

(1) vss. 17,18 - "let him who is on the housetop not go down . . ."

(2) vs.26,27 - "For just as the lightning comes from the east . . ."

(3) vs.28 - "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."

Section B (Events still future to us?)

Matthew 24:35ff:

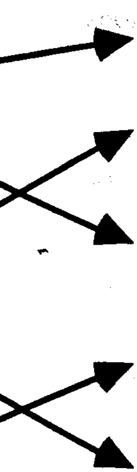
(4) vss.37-39 - "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah"

(5) vss.40,41 - "Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left."

Some hold the idea shown on the left. They think Matthew 24 spea
They apply the events mentioned in verses 1-34 (SECTION A) to th
future. Luke's statements in chapter 17 (on the right above) show t
Matthew 24, however there is not a hint that two different time perio
happen in the same time period ("the day that the Son of Man is rev
Notice on the chart above how Luke records the same events as M
is scrambled 2-4-1-5-3! Luke has an event from SECTION A follow
SECTION B, and finally one from SECTION A . This presents a pro
consideration, then Luke's account is incorrect, because he mixes t
is mistaken (and therefore uninspired), or we are wrong in dividing
events which would all happen in the same time period. And, Matth
when He spoke those words (the generation from 30-70 A.D.)!

Luke 17

All One Section (Events Mixed)



Luke 17:20-37

② vss.23,24 - "For just as the lightning, when it flashes ..."

④ vss.26,27 - "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man"

① vs.31 - "On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop ..."

⑤ vss.35,36 - "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left."

③ vs.37 - "... Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered."

different time periods: (1) 70 A.D. and, (2) a future end of the world.
ıe period (70 A.D.), and the events in verses 35ff (SECTION B) to our
ea cannot be correct. Luke 17 discusses the same events as
ıder consideration. Luke clearly deals with events that would
s.30). Luke's account cannot be divided into two sections.
ɹt in a different order. Matthew's order is 1-2-3-4-5, but Luke's order
ǝ from SECTION B, then another from SECTION A followed by
Matthew 24 really has two sections (or two time periods) under
'ents up as if they are all to happen in one time period. Either Luke
24 into two sections. Both Matthew and Luke speak of the same
tells us when those events would occur: the "generation" alive

wrote. In his book, *Redating the New Testament*, p. 13, he says, "One of the oddest facts about the N.T. is that ... the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD ... is never once mentioned as a past fact." How could any N. T. writer after 70 AD fail to comment on the incredible accuracy of Jesus' predictions (Matt. 24, et al)? Even if they had no direct references to the destruction, surely there would be subtle reflections of post-70 conditions in their writings which would betray a post-70 date. Dr. Robinson says that the absence of all mention of 70 AD by the N.T. writers is "as significant as the silence for Sherlock Holmes of the dog that did not bark" (p. 13). The N.T. writers did not mention 70 AD because it had not happened yet!

Several in the religious world today have written books presenting the idea that the miraculous gifts ceased at 70 AD. J. S. Russell, Cornelius Vanderwaal, George E. Gardiner, Franklin Camp, Guy N. Woods, and Max King are just a few. This is a staggering idea, especially regarding the implications it holds for the dating of the N.T. books. If miraculous gifts ceased at 70 AD, then writing by inspiration, which was one of those gifts, must have ceased at 70 AD also! This means that ALL N.T. books (including the book of Revelation) must have been written before the cessation at 70 AD!

Cessation of Miraculous Gifts At 70 AD?

The Pentecostals fail to realize the implications of their beliefs. If the miraculous gifts (tongue-speaking, prophecy, etc.) are still being given by God today, their "prophecies" would have to be INSPIRED and as authoritative as the sixty-six books of our present Bible. I haven't met a Pentecostal yet who had more than sixty-six books in his Bible!

The Pentecostals use 1 Cor. 1:5-8 and Acts 2:16-20 to support the idea that miraculous gifts are still being given

today. If we believe that we are still in the "Last Days" and that the "Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ", "The End", and "the Great and Glorious Day of the Lord" are still future, we may have difficulty proving them wrong!

The text (1 Cor. 1:7,8 - NASV) says, "...so that you are **not lacking** in any gift, awaiting eagerly **the revelation** (KJV says "coming") of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you to **the end**, blameless in **the day** of our Lord Jesus Christ" (emphasis mine - ES). The Pentecostal would respond to this by asking,

> Are the "Coming" ("revelation" - NASV), "End" and "Day of the Lord" still future? If so, miraculous gifts must still be available today because it says that we would NOT BE LACKING any of them while awaiting these events to happen!

The language used implies that they were expecting that END within their own lifetime (the Greek word for "waiting" implies this). If that "Coming", "End" and "Day of the Lord" are still future, then we should still have all the gifts! If the gifts are no longer available (and they aren't), then the "Coming", "End" and "Day of the Lord" must have already happened (at 70 AD)!

Notice how the Pentecostals approach this idea. They use Acts 2:16-20 to prove that miraculous gifts are still around today. This passage lists a group of miraculous activities which were to happen in the "Last Days" before "the Great and Notable Day of the Lord" would come. Included among them are speaking in tongues, prophesying, and others. The Pentecostal would quote these verses and say:

> Are we still in the LAST DAYS? If so, then the miraculous gifts mentioned in these verses should still

> be around, because it says they would be given during the Last Days before the "Great and Glorious Day" of the Lord comes!

Many Christians today believe that we are still "in the LAST DAYS". If so, we must still have the gifts! If the gifts ceased, then we must no longer be "in the LAST DAYS". And, Acts 2:20 adds an extra reason for looking carefully at what we believe about the Last Days. It says that all this miraculous activity in the Last Days would continue until (or "before") the "Great and Glorious Day of the Lord". The Pentecostals would again ask,

> Has the "Great and Glorious Day of the Lord" come yet? If not, then the miraculous gifts are still around!

By now we should realize that believing the LAST DAYS are still here puts one in a tough position regarding Pentecostalism. Believing that the Last Days ended at 70 AD and that the destruction of Jerusalem was God's "Great and Glorious Day" takes the problem away completely!

The phrase "Day of the Lord" is a term used very often in the Old Testament prophets to describe the judgment (or day of downfall) of some wicked nation (see Isa. 13:6-19; Ezek. 30:1-12; Joel 1:15–2:11; Zeph. 1:7-14; etc.). There is a lot of "end-of-the-world" type language used in the Bible which seems (at first sight) to be speaking of the end of the universe. The O.T. prophets use it abundantly. If we are not careful we will interpret it literally when it was not intended to be. Notice the language that is used in the following passages to describe the downfall of wicked nations (not the end of the world): Isa. 13; Isa. 24-34; Isa. 51,52; Jer. 4; Ezek. 32; whole book of Joel; Hag. 2; Zeph. 1; Zech. 14. The language used in these passages sounds like the End of the World, but the context makes it clear that it is talking only about national downfalls.

It was the "end of the world" for those nations. The same language is used in the N.T. to describe Christ's return and the end of the Jewish nation.

At 70 AD, Jesus returned and ended the LAST DAYS of the Jewish nation. It was God's Great and Glorious DAYfor the vindication of His people, and an awesome day of judgment and destruction for those who had rejected and crucified Jesus. The two passages, 1 Cor. 1:5-8 and Acts 2:16-20, both had their fulfillment at 70 AD! The Last Days of the Jewish nation ended then. A new age had begun. The miraculous gifts associated with the Last Days ceased also. Now we don't have to think in some nebulous terms about when the gifts ceased, such as "when the last apostle died". We can assign a definite date to it.

Does The O.T. Predict Christ's Return?

Most of us would probably answer a quick "yes" to the above question without realizing the implications. If you said "yes", you were right! Christians have always tried to convince Jews that the Old Testament predicted the Second Coming and other end-time events, HAVEN'T WE? Do any of these passages predict the Second Coming or other end-time events usually associated with it?

> Job 19:25-27; Psalm 96:13; Isa. 40:10; Isa. 66:15,16; Ezek. 38:7-23; Dan. 12:1-3; Joel 3:11-21; Zech. 14:1-21; Mal. 3:5; and Mal. 4:1-6

If these passages predict something which hasn't happened yet, we have a problem! In Luke 21:22, Jesus said that ALL O.T. PROPHECY would be fulfilled by the time Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. That means that all the events predicted in the above passages MUST HAVE been fulfilled! Do any of those passages speak of a "coming" in power and

great splendor with the angels" like the New Testament predictions do?

The New Testament clearly affirms that these end-time events were predicted in the Old Testament. Take these N.T. verses for examples: Acts 3:19-24; Acts 25:6-8,22; 1 Pet. 1:1-12; and 2 Pet. 3. When Peter was teaching in the temple concerning things that were happening in his day ("these days" - Acts 3:24), he says that all these things (including the return of Christ) were predicted by the O.T. prophets (Acts 3:21,24). Paul said he taught only those things which "the prophets and Moses said was going to take place" (Acts 26:22), and we know he often spoke of the Second Coming and other end-time events (1 Cor. 1:7f; 15:23; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:2,23; 2 Thess. 1:7,10; 2:1,8; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1,8,18; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 10:37). After discussing a "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5), which would come in connection with Jesus' return (1 Pet. 1:7), Peter says that all these end-time things were predicted in the Old Testament prophets (1 Pet. 1:1-11)! Peter stressed the fact (in 2 Peter 3) that he was only reminding them of what God had already promised in the O.T. prophets. He mentions a "coming" (vs. 4), "the Last Days" (vs. 3), "the Day of Judgment" (vs. 7), "the Day of the Lord" (vs. 10) and other end-time events. Whether we agree on the time of fulfillment of these things or not, one thing is certain": the Old Testament prophets predicted all these end-time events! And Peter says that "The End" of all these things was rapidly approaching (1 Pet. 4:7,17)! He wrote these things close to 70 AD. Therefore, the Second Coming MUST HAVE already occurred, since it was one of the things predicted in the O.T. which had to be fulfilled by the time Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD!

Conclusion

We have seen that this view of prophecy is very CONSERVATIVE in its effect on the liberal arguments against the inspiration of the New Testament. It leaves Pentecostalism no ground to stand on. It gives us absolute dates to pinpoint the completion of the N.T. canon and the cessation of miraculous gifts. It makes Revelation much easier to understand. And there is no compromise of essential truths, nor does it rob us of any essential motivation for living the Christian life. All of us have to die (Heb. 9:27), and there is no second-chance after that (Lk. 16:26). Regardless of whether there is a "second coming" in our future or not, we still need to be ready to meet death. That should be enough to motivate anybody!

Who would "add to" God's Word by saying that knowing **the time** of the Second Coming is essential to our salvation? Which one of us would make our own understanding of the book of Revelation essential to fellowship? Who knows exactly what every detail in the book of Revelation means so well that he can make it a test of fellowship? As long as opinions are not "pushed" dogmatically, we should not force a division over them. We must give each other freedom to hold opinions different from ours as long as they do not compromise the essentials of the faith.

There are many questions which could not be considered here because of the concern for brevity, but I will be more than happy to answer any inquiry that you may have. There is much already written on these things, so many of your questions might be answered by reading some of the books listed in the Bibliography. Much effort was spent to list EVERY writer who took a similar view to what is presented here, so you should find the Bibliography very helpful. Several of these books can be obtained from the publisher of this booklet.

Appendix I.

New Testament Passages Dealing With 70 A.D.

I. TIME REFERENCES:

A. Matt. 10:23 (would not finish before He returned)
B. Matt. 16:27f (& parallels) (some living would see it)
C. Matt. 24:33f (& parallels) (before generation ended)
D. Matt. 26:64 (& parallels) (Jewish rulers to see it)
E. Rom. 13:11f (already THE HOUR; DAY at hand)
F. 1 Cor. 7:26-31 (time shortened; world passing away)
G. 1 Cor. 10:11 (the ends of the ages had come)
H. 2 Thess.2:7 (mystery of lawlessness already at work)
I. Heb. 1:2 (it was the LAST DAYS)
J. Heb. 9:26 (the consummation of the ages had arrived)
K. Heb. 10:25 (THE DAY was drawing near)
L. Heb. 10:37 (He was coming in "a very little while")
M. James 5:7-9 (Coming of the Lord was AT HAND)
N. 1 Pet. 1:20 (it was already the LAST TIMES)
O. 1 Pet. 4:7 (THE END of all things was at hand)
P. 1 John 2:8,17,18 (it was the LAST HOUR)
Q. Jude 18,19 (the mockers of the LAST TIME)
R. Rev. 1:1-3 (must SHORTLY take place; NEAR)
S. Rev. 22:6,10 (must SHORTLY take place; NEAR)
T. Rev. 22:7,12,20 (He was to come very SOON)

II. PARABLES ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION:

A. Matt. 13:24-43 Parable of the Tares
B. Matt. 13:47-50 Parable of the Drag-net
C. Matt. 21:33ff (Mk. 12:1ff; Lk. 20:9ff) The Vineyard
D. Matt. 22:1ff (Lk. 14:16ff) Parable of Wedding Feast
E. Luke 19:11-17 Parable of the Nobleman

III. OTHER RELATED STATEMENTS ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION & THE END:

A. Matt. 3:7-12 (Lk. 3:7-17; Lk. 12:49)
B. Matt. 10:17-34 (Lk. 10:3-21; Lk. 12:11-56)
C. Matt. 23:29-24:44 (Mk. 13; Lk. 17:20-37; Lk. 21)
D. Luke 11:42-52
E. Luke 12:49
F. Luke 13:33-35
G. Luke 19:41-44
H. Luke 23:27-31

All eight writers of the New Testament are represented here. By comparing these verses with the language of the Old Testament prophets and the history of the First Century, we will understand them more easily. The following (non-inspired) writings can give us a better grasp of the historical background of the New Testament: Eusebius, Josephus, Tacitus, The Book of Enoch, Sibylline Oracles, The War Scrolls (Dead Sea Scrolls), The Apocryphal Writings, The Talmud and The Patristic Writings.

Appendix II.

REFERENCES IN JOSEPHUS REGARDING THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM:

1. Angelic Armies in the clouds surrounding Jewish cities ("chariots and troops of soldiers") (Wars VI.5.3).

2. Wars and Rumors of Wars and False Prophets, Mt. 24:6 (ANTIQ. XX.5.1-4; XX.8.5,6; WARS II.10.1; II.13.4-7).

3. The 70 AD destruction was worse than any since creation, Mark 13:19 (WARS, Preface, Sect. 1,4).

4. The Jews fought each other and did more damage against themselves than the Romans did! (WARS II.17.1-10; II.18.1-11; IV.6.2,3; V.1.2-5; V.6.1; V.13.6; VI.2.1,2).

5. Jerusalem was forewarned by signs, Luke 21:25 (WARS II.22.1,2; VI.5.2,3).

6. Jerusalem had a large maritime commerce, and was capitol over the ten districts of Palestine, Rev. 17:12-17; 18:11-24 (WARS III.3.5).

7. Josephus describes the Jewish revolt as being like a "beast" (Rev. 16:10; 17:16; 19:19-21), (WARS V.1.1; IV.7.4; IV.9,8; V.2.5).

8. The Jews set fire to their own temple first, not the Romans, Rev. 17:16 (WARS VI.2.9; VI.4.5; VI.6.2).

9. Jesus predicted these days of "vengeance," "distress," and "wrath" to the Jewish people, Luke 21:20-24 (WARS VI.3.3,4; VI.9.2-4; VII.1.1).

10. The 70 AD destruction was the turning-point of the ages ("revolution of the ages"), Matt. 24:3; 1 Cor. 2:6-8; 10:11; 7:29-31; 1 John 2:17,18.(WARS VI.4.5).

11. Pools of Blood and intense fires similar to descriptions in Rev. 14:20; Acts 2:19 (WARS V.1.2-5; VI.4.6; VI.5.1,2; VI.8.5).

12. Genealogical Records Destroyed (WARS VI.9.1).

13. God (not the Romans) took the Kingdom away from the Jews, Matt. 21:40ff (WARS VI.9.1).

14. Jerusalem was called "the Great City," Rev. 11:8; Rev. 18:21-24; (WARS VII.8.7).

15. The Ark of the Covenant and the Temple Vessels were taken to Rome by Titus, (WARS VII.5.5-7).

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